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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a consolidated report of the work of a group of experts investigating the possibility of organizing modern language teaching/learning in the form of a units/credits system, in order to allow an approach based on the individual motivations and capacities of the adult learner. In particular, three issues considered central to the introduction of a units/credits system are closely considered: (1) new forms of organization of linguistic content, (2) types of evaluation within a units/credits system, and (3) means of implementation of a units/credits system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education. This report details the conclusions reached and the recommendations made for research and development work in each of these areas. (Author)

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COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Symposium on

"A UNITS/CREDITS SYSTEM FOR MODERN LANGUAGES IN ADULT EDUCATION"

St. Wolfgang (Austria), 17-28 June 1973

CONSOLIDATED REPORT

by

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MODERN LANGUAGES IN ADULT EDUCATION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO A PROJECTED EUROPEAN UNITS-CREDITS SYSTEM

1.1 This paper presents a consolidated report of

(a) the work of a group of experts established by the Committee for Out-Of-School Education and Cultural Development following the Symposium on "Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education" held at Rüschlikon, Switzerland (3 - 7 May 1971);

(b) the information supplied on the basis of the questionnaire sent to national Rapporteurs of the St. Wolfgang Symposium.

1.2 The work of the Group has been set within three major concerns under the overriding philosophy of permanent education of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC): Modern Languages, Adult Education and Educational Technology.

1.2.1 The recommendations on modern language teaching adopted by the CCC at its 14th session (16 - 20 September 1968) were based on the belief:

- that if full understanding is to be achieved amongst the countries of Europe, the language barriers between them must be removed;

- that linguistic diversity is part of the European cultural heritage and that it should, through the study of modern languages, provide a source of intellectual enrichment rather than be an obstacle to unity;

- that only if the study of modern European languages becomes general will full mutual understanding and co-operation be possible in Europe;

- that a better knowledge of modern European languages will lead to the strengthening of links and the increase in international exchanges on which economic and social progress in Europe increasingly depends;

- that a knowledge of a modern language should no longer be regarded as a luxury reserved for an elite, but an instrument of information and culture which should be available to all.

1.2.2 The recommendations for an intensified programme, covering schools, institutions of higher and other forms of post-secondary education, adult education, initial and in-service training of modern language teachers and research contain the following points relevant to the present scheme:

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- development of language courses, making systematic use of television, radio and other audio-visual media in combination with modern study materials;

- revision of methods of assessment (tests, examinations, etc.) to give due prominence to auditory and oral skills;

- modernisation of courses of study of students who specialise in modern languages to ensure their proficiency in the present-day use of these languages and their acquisition of a sound knowledge of the civilisation of the country concerned;

- introduction or expansion of arrangements for study visits (by means, where appropriate, of exchange or interchange) to foreign countries whose mother tongue is being studied;

- provision of facilities (for instance, language centres) to cater for the general and professional needs of students who are not language specialists, but who wish to learn or improve their command of modern languages;

- the creation of proper facilities for "permanent education" in modern languages enabling all European adults to learn a language or languages of their choice in the most efficient way;

- research into the factors affecting language acquisition, learning and teaching at all ages and with all categories of learner;

- research into the development of the most suitable syllabuses, materials and methods of teaching for all categories of pupils and students;

- definition of criteria of language proficiency, leading to the production of tests for evaluating the results of language learning;

- preparation of basic lists of words and structures of the European languages (spoken and written) to facilitate the construction of study materials appropriate to modern aims and methods of language teaching, and examination of the possibility of furthering the study of less widely known European languages;

- analysis of the specialised language of science and technology, economics, etc.

1.2.3 The CCC also invited international governmental and non-governmental organisations, publishers and producers of equipment concerned with modern language teaching to assist in carrying out the intensified European programme in modern languages.

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1.2.4 Permanent Education

At the 20th session of the Council for Cultural Co-operation, the document "Fundamentals for an integrated educational policy" (Studies on Permanent Education No. 21, 1971) was adopted as a guide in the future consideration of its educational programme. The study, based on reports of working parties and round tables, was prepared under the direction of Professor B. Schwartz, Adviser on Permanent Education at the Ministry of Education in Paris. Permanent education sees the education process as a coherent process, from cradle to grave, in which the various institutions concerned have a justifiable, rational role to play. In the long term, the objectives and organisation of schools and universities will be profoundly affected by the fact of their providing the basis for, rather than the whole of, a formal education, and by their operating in the context of a population which has a study element as part of its regular pattern of living. In the short term, it is adult education which will be most affected by the concept, as society attempts to deal with the problems and demands of increasing social, geographical and professional mobility, increasing speed of social and technological change, and the consequences of an inherited mass educational underprivilege which makes a substantial proportion of populations ill-adapted to deal with the conditions of modern living. Permanent education, therefore, sets itself to provide answers to the following questions:

- How can each individual be brought to organise his own experience?

- How can people be helped to cope with a shifting employment situation?

- How can everybody be enabled to develop his creative abilities and personality to the full?

The first of these objectives looks to a learner-centre, motivation-based approach. It is anti-authoritarian, encouraging individual initiative and responsibility in the exercise of choice of objectives and methods, and self-assessment in the monitoring of progress and performance.

The second is concerned with vocational education, with the provision of operational learning programmes geared to specialised requirements, building on a "common trunk" of more general conceptual and methodological preparation.

The third is concerned with the reduction of regional and social discrimination, the alleviation of the effects of educational underprivilege, the development of independence and self-awareness, the breaking down of hard-and-fast barriers between work and leisure.

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1.2.5 It is therefore expected that increases in educational expenditure will in future be channelled more and more into the provision of long-term part-time study in adult life. This provision will be designed to enable the individual to adapt to the relevant advances in science and technology and their consequences, to equip him for greater social mobility and to provide cultural enrichment.

1.2.6 It is also expected that the provision of an "éducation permanente" will make increasing use of educational technology, developing multi-media systems on a massive scale, exploiting mass-media and regarding personal teaching in an institutional framework as but one element in these systems.

1.2.7 Within such learning systems, a different organisation of examinations and qualifications is expected to develop. Instead of a single global examination in which overall competence is graded in a "subject", or groups of subjects, once and for all, it appears more appropriate to analyse "subjects" into areas of knowledge and skills, so that learning units to be taught and tested may be of a size that can be acquired in a given time as the result of following a course of a particular type. The effective learning of such a unit would then be recognised by the award of a "credit". By successively acquiring combinations of units/credits, adult students would then build up a study profile appropriate to their individual needs. Certain profiles might then be accepted as attaining different kinds and levels of competence for professional purposes. It is hoped that such qualifications would gain acceptance on a European scale and be transferable between any institution involved.

1.2.8 The main value of a units/credits system as described above is seen to lie in the fact that it allows maximal flexibility and individualisation of learning:

(i) if the pupil stops after obtaining a certain number of credits he can always start again whenever he likes without losing credits previously earned; he will have "capitalised" on his achievement (important for adults whose studies may be interrupted by personal, family and business reasons outside their control);

(ii) students can change institutions (important for adults obliged to move for professional reasons);

(iii) the related studies and free options give students a wide choice (important in adult vocational education on cost-effectiveness grounds, but also more generally);

(iv) to some extent they can plot their own course, which favours independence (cf. B. Schwartz: The units/credits system in doc. CCC/EES (71) 135).

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1.3 The development of a units/credits system for modern languages in adult education is an almost inevitable consequence of the intersection of the two programme guidelines (modern languages - permanent education) as outlined above. There are, moreover, further aspects of the situation in regard to adult language which further indicate its desirability.

1.3.1 Modern foreign languages have only recently become a regular part of the universal pattern of school studies. Indeed, this primary objective of the CCC has not yet been reached in by any means all member countries. A substantial proportion of the population in most countries remains monolingual. This proportion rises markedly with age. As the learning of at least one major European language grows, total ignorance of foreign languages will become primarily a problem of the middle-aged.

1.3.2 A high proportion of people who claim to know a foreign language do not, in fact, possess an effective command of it. For one thing, a language is not a fixed asset, but degenerates with disuse. For another, the teaching of languages in schools is often ineffective, owing to low motivation and, in some cases, to inadequate methods. This is particularly likely to be the case in the generations whose normal education and contacts were disrupted by war and other barriers.

1.3.3 The languages taught in school are not necessarily those which the adult requires. This applies both to the languages themselves and the particular varieties and uses of language taught. Schools, correctly, teach a major language of international currency (often English) in a generalised way. As the "career watershed" of pupils has not yet been reached, no useful predictions can be made about the specific future language needs of learners. Attempts to introduce linguistic specialisations are likely to be more useful to a few at the cost of higher irrelevance to the rest. The adult finds himself confronted at a specific point in his career with a specific need for a specific language for some specific purpose. At that point he is highly motivated and responds well to a course geared to his purposes.

It is noteworthy that in the Fed. Rep. of Germany a heavy dominance of English in further education immediately after the war has been followed by a gradual diversification, possibly because of the greatly increased teaching of English in schools. Thus the achievement of the CCC target does not necessarily reduce the demand for adult language teaching but diversifies it. Indeed, through the facilitating effect of the learning of one foreign language upon another, demand may well be increased.

1.3.4 In any case, the greatly increased mobility in Europe as a result of increasing integration and the achievements of the communications industry creates new language needs.

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Partly this affects workers in the tourist trade and the communications industry itself, whose business it is to deal with foreign travellers. Correspondingly, the well-marked tourist lanes, conference centres, etc., are adequately served linguistically as in other ways. However, the process of interpenetration is no longer confined to these lanes, and a greater number of travellers are reluctant to depend for the satisfaction of their needs upon a factor they cannot control - the ability of the other man to speak your language. The resulting need for languages is not seen by learners as purely pragmatic or vocational. Motivation surveys carried out appear to indicate that learners attach more weight to social uses, i.e. being able to enter into social communication with fellow human beings.

1.3.5 A special case is created by immigrants. Here we must make a number of distinctions. One is between temporary and permanent immigration. Permanent immigrants seek total integration into the host community. They require a near-native command which will enable them to lead full lives as members of the community. They must also expect the next generation to acquire the host language as their language for life, and cannot encapsulate themselves without deprivation. Many temporary immigrants (au pair girls, students) have language learning as a principal objective. At the other extreme, immigrant workers may wish, and be encouraged, to form encapsulated communities, their contacts with the host community being confined to a minimum of pragmatic and working relations. They will clearly tend to acquire only the minimum pidgin necessary to shop, to obey orders, etc. These workers are often educationally and socially disadvantaged, lacking experience, aptitude and motivation for language learning, and without self-confidence. In between are the individual immigrants, professional men and skilled specialist craftsmen, considered and treated as foreigners, but permitted to form social and professional links with the host community, and needing, therefore, more substantial and sophisticated linguistic equipment. For the immigrant groups as a whole, formal language instruction is but one element in an on-going language learning process, which it should seek to structure, not to replace.

2.1.1 Modern languages in adult education is then seen to be of growing importance, while the heterogeneity and specificity of the characteristics, experience, interests and needs of adults, combined with their dispersed, non-captive character as a target group, indicate the need for an organisation at once firm, flexible and open-ended such as is offered by a units/credits system, in which the dichotomous choice between a large global examination and unrecognised objectiveless study is replaced by a system of freely combinable units of manageable size.

2.1.2 Modern languages were therefore chosen by the Committee for Out-Of-School Education and Cultural Development as a key area for the development of a pilot units/credits system.

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2.2.1 The languages concerned are primarily those of countries represented on the CCC, since the knowledge of these languages directly contributes to mutual understanding and integration, but also of neighbouring peoples, with whom communication and the development of mutual understanding is of great importance if current political divisions are not to be powerfully reinforced. In any case, as international contacts widen and distances shrink, an increasing number of European experts in extra-European languages will be needed.

2.2.2 Of the CCC languages, a special status attaches to English and French, the official languages of the CCC, which are sufficiently widely taught to function as international linguae francae. The fact that they are largely used between non-native speakers as a means of communication has important consequences for the objectives and methods of teaching these languages. To a lesser extent, this also holds for German, Italian and Spanish.

2.3 This scheme is initially concerned only with the education of adults.

2.4.1 Great resources in terms of money, people and time are already committed to adult language teaching in Europe. The system cannot hope to replace this effort, or to take it over. The resources directly controlled by the CCC do not permit us to directly supplement the existing provisions. Our aim must therefore be to work for the more effective deployment of existing committed resources, and the stimulation of demand, leading to pressure upon public and private bodies to increase provision.

2.4.2 These objectives are to be pursued by a set of guidelines, together with incentives to follow them. The units/credits system has to be essentially permissive in character. It is this characteristic which makes it particularly appropriate for large-scale international use. An attempt to produce a rigid monolithic system in a field in which there are many existing interests, strong and weak, with established methods and structures would be certain to provoke resistance, and attract criticism on the grounds of dogmatism. After all, recent research has tended to reinforce the common-sense view, that different methods and objectives are appropriate to different kinds of audience. A rigid system, even though it be innovatory and progressive on its introduction, runs the grave danger of inhibiting subsequent experimentation.

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2.4.3 I would suggest that it is preferable to adopt a somewhat weaker objective: to recognise, and encourage, a rich ecological variety of language learning, corresponding to an equally rich ecological variety of language use and needs. To provide a clearer conceptual articulation of the objectives and content of syllabuses, which will enable them to be more effectively described. To develop, on the basis of such descriptions, evaluative measures which will enable equivalences to be established between existing examinations. At the same time, principled criteria should be established for the evaluation and recognition of new courses, whether these are conventional in character or experimental in respect of content, method or means of assessment. Indeed, to encourage innovation within a stable framework is a major objective of the project.

2.5 More effective adult learning is thus to be brought about by

(a) stimulating governments to survey

(i) their existing provision for adult language learning;

(ii) the actual and potential demand for language teaching;

(iii) the motivations of learners, and the social and economic needs of the community;

(b) providing a model of language learning systems which are constructed in accordance with the principles of educational technology and of permanent education. In particular, encouragement should be given to courses and learning programmes which are learner-centred and motivation based, which pursue operationally-defined objectives, and which use techniques of large-scale multi-media organisation to optimise the working together of media, teachers and self-instruction in an integrated system;

(c) encouraging methods of assessment and perhaps recognising, organising, or even perhaps eventually conducting examinations on a units/credits basis which will test relevant knowledge and skills and induce appropriate methods of teaching and learning.

3.1.1 The Rüschlikon Symposium was held, following a number of preparatory meetings of experts, "to examine the possibility of organising modern language teaching/learning in the form of a units/credits system, in order to allow an approach based on the individual motivations and capacities of the adult learner". In particular, three issues considered central to the introduction of a units/credits system were closely considered:

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(i) new forms of organisation of linguistic content;

(ii) types of evaluation within a units/credits system;

(iii) means of implementation of a units/credits system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education.

3.1.2 The Symposium reached a number of conclusions and made recommendations for research and development work in each of these areas (cf. doc. CCC/EES (71) 135, pp. 38 - 43). Among them, the following may be noted:

"I. New forms of organisation of linguistic content

1. The organisation of the content of a language learning system for adults must result from the analysis of the acts of language communication in which they are to participate. Any description of language contents must take into consideration language systems, language skills and language situations.

2. It was felt that in all these respects successive competence levels should be established and that at each level it was possible to distinguish between a common core required by all users and specialised components, which would be characterised primarily by a specialised vocabulary and formulaic expressions and by the special application of language knowledge and skills to the distinctive situations of the specialised field.

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4. A hierarchy of levels of increasing competence should be recognised for each situation. Simple direct question and answer at a basic level would correspond at higher levels to a greater subtlety in personal interaction and the establishment of social relations.

5. User profiles might be established for classes of adult learners in terms of special knowledge and differentially developed skills required. It was pointed out, however, that too little was at present known about the transfer of knowledge and skills for such profiles to be used with complete confidence.

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7. It was considered that further research into situational structure was required and that the analysis of situations in terms of persons, purposes, setting and matter would be useful in order to establish a typology of common generalised language situations within a socio-cultural framework.

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8. The general design of a language contents model was considered and there was general agreement that some cylindrical form would be appropriate, with a central core representing the development of a general language competence through different levels, and with specialised components radiating from this core at each level with a certain amount of overlap between contiguous specialisms.

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10. It was recognised that a viable units/credits system had still to be established. It was unclear what the optimal size of language units would be . A large number would allow greater flexibility in making combinations and eliminate the problem of comparability. On the other hand, as a result of the highly integrated nature of language, too finely differentiated units might lead to excessive redundancy. A considerable programme of research and development would be necessary, firstly to provide an adequate specification of language content for each individual language and then for the development of language units, at first on a restricted experimental scale.

11. Research

Participants recommended that the research and development programme envisaged above should pay particular attention to the following:

(a) a statistical survey of existing patterns of adult language study in Europe with a view to establishing the major categories of adult language learners and their needs, both now and in the foreseeable future;

(b) the structure and typological classification of situations.

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II. Types of evaluation within a units/credits system

It was emphasised that evaluation should serve as a means of collecting data:

(a) to provide a basis for a better understanding of the educational process;

(b) to enable the student to adopt an appropriate course of study;

(c) to provide information to bodies outside the educational system.

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When applying these three objectives in a units/credits system a further useful distinction may be made as follows:

(a) feedback to the student on his performance, which should so far as possible be continuous and self-administered;

(b) feedback to an institution and to students on the success of a specific unit, which should be locally administered; and

(c) recognition of a student's achievement by the award of certificates and diplomas, which should be so organised as to ensure comparability on a European scale.

In applying a units/credits system evaluation is a most useful tool in gathering data to facilitate change in the system especially during the introductory period.

It was felt strongly that the student should be given a greater responsibility for determining the pace of his own learning and should be involved wherever possible in the process of evaluation.

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The construction of a system for evaluation should be closely integrated with the building up of a units/credits system and be based on the content of the units. In the development project leading to a units/credits system it will be an important part of the work to develop the specific type and content of evaluation to be used within that system.

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III. Means of implementation of a units/credits system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education

1. It was suggested that the viability of a units/credits system depended on the findings of a feasibility study. A balance had to be struck between the desire for a highly flexible learner-centred motivation-based system of adult education on the one hand and the conditions obtaining in the reality of the adult learner's situation.

2. Further research was required into the needs of various types of adult learners and might inter alia be conducted on:

(a) those pursuing education for their own personal satisfaction;

(b) those with little formal education in their own language;

(c) those who will benefit professionally or vocationally from such studies.

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It was emphasised that the various needs explored would vary greatly in some cases from one national context to another. For this reason, enquiries into this field should be conducted both on a European and a national basis.

3. It was suggested that further studies should be conducted in the following fields:

(a) the investigation of the character of units and sub-units in a units/credits system;

(b) the nature and function of evaluation within the units/credits system;

(c) the relatability of sets of units in a units/credits system to form groups marking levels of proficiency at particular points along a scale of achievement;

(d) an enquiry into the possibility of encouraging the learning of lesser-known languages through pooled resources and the use of a multi-media approach;

(e) ways of emsuring that an efficient interchange of information and experiences is established between bodies concerned with adult education, with a view to contributing towards the setting up of a central agency for the provision of resources.

4. The development of a theoretical framework in a units/credits system demands the early operation of a number of pilot schemes. Such schemes would tend to reflect the priorities in adult education in national contexts.

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6. A units/credits system on the envisaged scale can only be implemented by making use of educational technology. The wide coverage afforded by media systems will make for increased cost-effectiveness."

3.2.1 Following the Rüschlikon Symposium, a group of experts was convened to consider what steps should be taken to follow up the recommendations of the Rüschlikon Symposium. The Group considered the Rüschlikon report, and extracted the following set of questions as defining the main issues affecting the development of language learning systems for adults:

"1. How to promote European integration and the mobility of populations through increased language learning?

2. How to increase motivations for language learning by adults and how to optimise provisions in language learning to meet the diversified (social and vocational) needs of adult learners?

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3. How to break down the global concept of language into units and sub-units based on an analysis of particular groups of adult learners, in terms of the communication situations in which they are characteristically involved?

4. How to structure a European multi-media system for this purpose through the application of educational technology? (International co-ordination of production efforts is already recognised as a necessity, since large development and production costs have to be offset by comparable economics of scale.)

5. How to use such a system for the orientation of potential software producers (European label)?

6. How to use such a system for the information of the learner on available material and facilities?

7. How to develop within such a system appropriate and inbuilt forms of evaluation enabling adult learners to build up a study profile appropriate to their individual needs? (Such qualifications to gain acceptance on a European scale: e.g. by the award of a European language diploma.)"

3.2.2 The Group agreed to concern itself with the following tasks:

"(a) to break down the global concept of language into units and sub-units based on an analysis of particular groups of adult learners, in terms of the communication situations in which they are characteristically involved. This analysis should lead to a precise articulation of the notion of 'common core' with specialist extensions at different proficiency levels;

(b) to set up on the basis of this analysis an operational specification for learning objectives;

(c) to formulate, in consultation with the Steering Group on Educational Technology, a system defining the structure of a multi-media learning system to achieve these objectives in terms of the units/credits concepts."

The results of these studies will then be made available, in published form, to producers of multi-media programmes and to educational authorities for guidance in the preparation of courses, the evaluation of student performance and the recognition of competent performance at different levels and in different areas of language use.

It was agreed that in view of the urgent need to provide guidance to producers and authorities, the above programme should be based on existing knowledge and short term research.

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On the Group's recommendation contracts were given to Mr. Richterich, Mr. Wilkins and Dr. van Ek, for preliminary papers on theoretical and methodological aspects of certain basic problems, i.e. (i) a model for the definition of adult language needs, (ii) the nature of a competence common to most if not all types of language learner, and (iii) the basic level of competence below which the grant of credits was impracticable. These studies would serve as the basis for the preparation of an operational specification of learning objectives, and an attempt to map out an integrated European units/credits system.

4.1.1 The Group attaches considerable importance to more detailed investigation of the nature of adult language needs in Europe. It makes little sense to subscribe to a "learner-centred, motivation-based" approach (as we do in defining 'main issues' 2, 3 and 7) unless the needs of learners find direct expression in the context of courses and associated tests and examinations. In any case, any particular course or examination embodies some particular set of choices. Any text arises from some situation, real or imagined. If these are not to be arbitrarily chosen, but selected as appropriate to the candidate concerned, it is helpful, even essential, to base decisions on more than imaginative guesswork. In short, Main Issue 3 is the heart of the matter. The global concept of language is necessarily broken down into units and sub-units as soon as any course or examination is constructed in practice. The problem is not whether to do so, but only how best to do it. That is a question that can only be answered by a proper analysis of the nature and needs of learners.

4.1.2 Moreover, since conditions are not by any means yet suitable for a fully individual learning, course planning (especially where based on mass-media, the cost-effectiveness of which is heavily dependent on large-scale operation) needs to be based on identification of substantial target audiences. How then can we establish (a) the actual present size of the population engaged in language learning, (b) the approximate size of the constituency for language learning by future media-based mass courses given present conditions, or (c) additional incentives and facilities, (d) the course content which represents the highest common factor of the general mass of language learners, (e) the numbers throughout Europe meeting the various prior knowledge requirements for each language, i.e. the potential audience for courses at intermediate and advanced levels, (f) the number in each country, for each language and each level with defined special interests, to form viable clusters for specialised courses.

4.1.3 It is clear then, that as a basis for the effective planning of a units/credits system, information should be collected (and kept updated) on the statistics of adult language learning and use in Europe. The statistics concern (a) the general demography of the adult population in terms of age, sex, education, social class, etc., (b) the existing

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knowledge of languages distributed over these demographic categories, (c) projections as to what the schools are and will be producing in the way of language competence in young adults, (d) the subjectively felt language needs of adults in different categories, (e) the expressed needs of society for different kinds of language ability, (f) the objective patterns of existing foreign language use among adults in different demographic categories, (g) the short and long-term projections of language use, and thus of needs.

4.1.4 These figures must of course be further broken down according to particular languages.

4.2.1 The Group has given careful consideration to the ways in which this information ought to be collected. Mr. R. Richterich has concerned himself particularly with this problem, producing first an analytic classification of adult language learners, then a model for the analysis of adult language needs.

4.2.2 Mr. Richterich sees his model not only as providing a tool for the collection of statistical information, but sees in it a more direct pedagogical value within a units/credits system. "Needs and motivations should not be confused. The former are, so to speak, imposed by the reality of the language situation, and knowing a language means precisely being able to respond appropriately to the numerous requirements of that reality ... The analysis of needs will lead to a definition of aims which, operationally speaking, must be translated into language acts and learning acts. .... (the paper) proposes a method which should, on the basis of a knowledge of language needs, make it possible to move on to language acts and learning acts, in other words a method for defining the content of the learning units and their pedagogic strategies."

4.2.3 Richterich's approach to the definition of learning needs is based on an analysis of acts of communication in terms of language situations (defined by agents, the persons involved, and categories of time and place) and operations (comprising the functions which the act of communication has to fulfil, the objects to which it relates and the means used to produce it). The categories developed can then be closely matched to a parallel analysis of learning needs.

4.2.4 The system of categories in the model, while no claim is made for it to be exhaustive, is very rich. In the situational analysis, for instance, in addition to basic demographic features, agents are characterised according to the number involved, their social, psychological and locutionary roles. Time is analysed according to time of day, duration, frequency and temporal sequence. Place is viewed on a larger geographical scale, but also according to a linguistic topography which distinguishes open and enclosed spaces, public, private and professional environments. The total number of possible intersections of categories within these variables approaches 2×10^{10}. In addition, some 1,000 language operations are

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characterised; according to functions, or purposes of communication (such as conveying information, persuading people, evoking past experiences, etc.) objects (e.g. reference to affective status, attitudes, beliefs, social ties, events, things and people) and means (e.g. face-to-face interaction, lectures, television, books, etc.)

4.2.5 In all, the total inventory of situations and operations generated by the model is of the same order of magnitude as the total number of linguistic exchanges (of say 10 seconds duration) that occur in Europe in a month. The scheme of possible learning situations and operations is equally rich. The model thus goes a long way towards providing a full classificatory framework which will enable the operational and situational range of any language course or examination to be evaluated not simply in gross terms, but through its microstructure. Whether this notion can be given mathematical precision through, perhaps, some kind of vector analysis is not clear. No such claim is at present made.

4.3.1 In application, the model in any case provides a valuable check list for course designers and examiners, who can gauge the situational and operational coverage of their productions, and the degree of matching, in these terms, of courses with associated examinations.

4.3.2 The other principal applications of the model concern practical steps to establish language needs. These include content analysis, i.e. "observing and examining the oral and written use made by a given person or class of persons, and then deducing objective needs which are foreseeable and generalisable", the conduct of surveys and the design of questionnaires for use in such surveys. It is proposed that member countries should determine, as a representative sample of the country's adult population, (a) the number of persons familiar with one or more foreign language, with a breakdown in terms of their demographic characteristics, language known, degree of knowledge and frequency of use, (b) those now learning a language (with breakdown by characteristics, languages, standards, methods, duration of course and qualifications aimed at), (c) those intending or wishing to learn languages (with their characteristics, intentions and motivations). A detailed form of questionnaire for category (b) is suggested, as perhaps the best way of eliciting direct consumer values and needs.

4.4.1 The Group have attempted to ascertain through the questionnaire to national rapporteurs to the St. Wolfgang Symposium what information of the above kind is already available. The results, which are rather sparse, and based on different kinds of information, confirm the wide variation from one country to another.

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% Foreign languages spoken or studied

Country	% mono-linguals	E	F	G	Sw	Sp	It	Ar	Gk	Port.	Pol.	Russ.	Other
Denmark (1970)	45	33	8	30	31								
France (1970)	58	22	-	13		11	7	2		1	1		
Greece	85 (65 in cities)	70											30 all other FL
Turkey (1965)	85	7	4	1						3		5	80% (mainly bilingualism between Turkish and minority languages)

The figures for France and Turkey relate to national censuses. Those for Denmark, on a Readers' Digest survey.

4.4.2 Sweden reports two surveys relating to English, one by Swedish Radio, and one by Peter Ahlquist (1967) closer to the Richterich model. Ahlquist reports that 50% of Swedes have some knowledge of English. The rapidly changing picture is however revealed by the age distribution: 50-80 23%; 30-49 52%; -29 92%. In 1973, the 90% level will presumably apply to at least -35.

The level of knowledge was:

comprehensive school	(2 - 5 years)	29%
secondary school	(6 - 7 ")	30%
upper secondary school	(8 - 9 ")	22%
university		2%
correspondence and other courses		17%

English language needs were analysed into listening (77%), speaking (73%), reading (70%) and writing (49%), showing a clear priority of speech over writing, and understanding over production. A motivation study showed a strong priority of private purposes (64%) over job (25%) and study (11%) needs, this order being most strongly marked for speaking and least for writing. The study of situations of use shows a similar trend. The situations in which the need to understand speech arose were: tourist contacts (35%), TV (24%), foreigners in Sweden (23%). Instruction (6%), telephone (4%), film and theatre (4%), radio (4%) were far behind. Thus interpersonal communication was more highly rated than indirect contact other than TV. In active speech, the priority was even more clearly marked - tourist contacts (55%), foreigners in Sweden (29%), longer stay abroad (4%), instruction (9%), telephone (3%). Reading needs

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were more differentiated - pamphlets and instructions (41%), letters (22%), professional and technical texts (16%), newspapers and magazines (14%), fiction (9%). The priority given to the pragmatic over general interest and cultural reading is clear and sharp. It is also striking that the expressed interest in newspapers, magazines and fictional reading together fall short of the single figure for TV, which appears as a stronger channel of cultural penetration. Writing needs showed a clear priority for private letters (55%) over study purposes (20%), business letters (20%) and form-filling (4%).

4.4.3 These figures, if of general validity give important indications for the identification and quantification of mass audiences for different kinds of language course and the orientation of motivation-based syllabuses. They do not entirely square with the results of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation's investigation among adults on the interest for courses in TV and Radio (Report 30/69). This showed that 66% of the population stated an interest in courses, of which 46% were interested in job advancement, against 34% hobby or general interest, 12% study purposes and 8% no answer. Of course, potential language students might be atypical, but as subjects English and German were ranked 1 and 2 with interest at 55% and 31% respectively, followed by Swedish (9, 19%), French (13, 17%), Spanish (19, 14%) Italian (7, 8%) and Russian (29, 7%). Among types of course, TV alone was preferred at 36% over study circles (18%), TV and correspondence (18%), radio and TV (11%), radio or TV and study circle (9%), radio alone (9%), evening school (9%) and correspondence courses (8%). Two terms (45%) was the preferred length of course, over one term (35%), three terms (4%), four or more terms (13%) and no answer (3%).

4.4.4 Putting this information together, it would appear, with the necessary reservations, that the central mass course would be a TV course in English of two terms' duration with a vocational aim but concentrating on the understanding of spoken language in situations of face-to-face personal contact in private life, with some attention to the reading and writing of private letters and an ability to read public notices, pamphlets and instructions.

While doubtlessly oversimplified this yields a relatively clear profile, which it would be useful to compare with results from other countries. Sweden is a relatively small, but outward-looking country. Languages would not everywhere be at the top of the shopping list. France reports a survey on 10 April 1972 by Informations industrielles et commerciales showing that 7% wish to learn a foreign language (some 2½ million adults).

4.5.1 While surveys on adult languages use and needs are thus rather scattered, most if not all member States maintain institutes of public opinion or statistical offices which could

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conduct surveys on representative samples. There are also a number of international public opinion institutes (e.g. Gallup) and numerous institutes of market research. Most correspondents considered that their national bodies could undertake such a survey. The Austrian Statistisches Zentralamt plans one for 1974. The Swiss report a federal law on educational statistics in course of realisation for its first reading in 1973. A commission for schools statistics is to be set up, and will have adult education in its terms of reference. Pilot surveys of the language needs of industry and the public service have been carried out in Britain, as well as a detailed study of national language needs on a restricted scale conducted by Professor E. Hawkins at the University of York, in the course of which questionnaires to employers and employees have been developed together with interviewing procedures and other methods of investigation.

4.5.2 Recently, Mr. Richterich has prepared for the Group a draft questionnaire to language learners based on his model, but streamlined, and has administered it on a restricted scale to groups of students of French at Eurocentres in Switzerland (while no general conclusions can be drawn from such a small biased sample, it is perhaps noteworthy that they are approximately 45% students by profession, with an average age of 23, 66% female, 45% German-speaking, having personally decided to study French (75%) for vocational reasons (60%) and that much more importance appears to be attached to oral proficiency than to auditory comprehension, reading and writing (in that order).

4.5.3 It appears both desirable and feasible for surveys of adult language use, motivations and needs to be extended across member countries, within some framework which will allow successive investigators to benefit from the previous experience of others, and to feed back their own experiences. In addition to developing questionnaires for use in national censuses and for administration to teachers and students in various kinds of adult education, the Group have elicited through the questionnaire to national rapporteurs lists of bodies representative of teaching institutions of diverse kinds whose co-operation might be sought in a major fact-finding exercise, should these be undertaken on either a national or a supranational level.

4.6.1 Through their questionnaire to national rapporteurs, the Group also attempted to assemble the available information on the scale of existing adult language knowledge and teaching embodied in educational statistics and the like. The relevant questions appear to be the following:

(a) What levels of language knowledge/proficiency can be attributed to different classes of school-leaver? In what proportions? The answer to this question is necessary for the establishment of the constituencies for different language courses for adults, which have different prior knowledge requirements;

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(b) What numbers are engaged in adult education in what languages, at what levels, in what specialisations, in what kinds of institution?

(c) what examinations are currently taken by adult learners in what languages, at what levels?

4.6.2 In fact, the information generally available did not prove sufficient to build up any kind of statistical picture from which reliable and interesting conclusions could be drawn.

Naturally, better statistics are available at school level. It was however decided to await the results of the extensive enquiry being pursued for the CCC by Professor Riddy.

In very few cases (mostly Nordic countries) could actual figures be given of adults studying in various kinds of institution. The results given here are therefore tentative, impressionistic and indicative mainly of trends and relative importance in different countries.

4.6.3 Extensive courses in official institutions appear to bear the main burden of adult teaching except in those countries which rely primarily on private schools (as Greece and Switzerland) or on officially subsidised institutions (as Denmark). The statistical trend appears to be one of slow growth in almost all branches of language learning. A decline in interest is reported only by Switzerland for official vacation courses and by Sweden for private producers of self-instructional courses. A rapid increase in student numbers is reported from Denmark in official non-specialist courses, extensive and intensive, from the UK and Ireland in courses given by private institutions, from Norway in courses organised by industry, and in Norway, Sweden and (recently) the UK in broadcast language courses. Really large student numbers are reported mainly in these latter and 250,000 in Sweden, 400,000 to 1 million in the UK and over 1 million in Turkey. The German Volkshochschulen report that in 1968 foreign languages accounted for 22% of all courses offered, the number of participants being some 365,800.

4.6.4 Information about the distribution of languages taught is only exceptionally available: the Volkshochschulen report for 1968 37% English, 21% French, 11% Italian, 7% Russian, 3% Spanish and 3% Scandinavian. A special volume of Berliner Statistik gives detailed figures for West Berlin in 1969 by sponsor (predominantly VHS) as well as language: English 38.6% (of a total of 51,370 language students) French 17.7%, Italian 7.6%, Spanish 6.7%, German as a foreign language 6.7%, Russian 3.4%, Scandinavian 2%, others (less German as mother tongue) 8.3%. Austria reports 1,300 students of English per annum in Austro-American institutes, and an unspecified number taught through the British Council.

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2,400 students of French taught by the Institut Français de Vienne,
1,500 students of Italian at the Istituto Italiano,
650 students of Spanish and Portuguese at the Lateinamerika institut,
6,500 language students in institutes organised by trade and industry,
45,000 language students in Volkshochschulen.

In the latter, English is studied everywhere, French in many places, Italian and Serbo-Croat in the South. The number of Volkshochschule classes in Vienna, Linz and Graz together is: English 210, French 98, Italian 75, Spanish and Portuguese 40, German as a foreign language 33. Otherwise, information about languages and levels has to be deduced from examination entries.

4.6.3 Examinations listed by national rapporteurs as open to adult students and having some kind of official status or public standing fall into two classes:

(a) examinations centred on a cultural or commercial institute in the country of the language being studied. Examples are:

(i) the examinations in English of the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. This is taken in all member countries, in centres organised by local interests, or in many cases, the British Council,

(ii) examinations conducted by the Alliance Française;

(iii) the Goethe-institut and

(iv) the Società Dante Alighieri,

(v) University of London GCE,

(vi) London Chamber of Commerce,

(vii) Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Paris,

(viii) Chambres de Commerce Espagnoles,

(ix) Eurocentres.

(b) Examinations specific to the country where the language is being studied. In Britain, where an exhaustive survey by the University of Sussex is approaching publication, there appear to be some 40 such examinations of some standing, but taken by surprisingly small numbers of candidates. France lists the university examinations: agrégation, CAPES, licence et maîtrise; Denmark 6 examinations between levels 1 and 4, Norway 4 between levels 1 and 5. The Certificates of the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband, originally placed in this category, are now gaining wider currency, at first in German-speaking countries, and may now be placed rather in the first category.

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4.6.6 Examinations vary widely in their content, particularly as to balance between spoken and written language, the place accorded to translation, and a literary component. There is a general movement towards more purely language examinations, with a more explicit content, and a wider range of test activities, in which the oral tests play a larger part, together with comprehension tests. This trend is exemplified particularly by the Volkshochschulzertifikate, the Scandinavian examinations and the new forms of the Cambridge examinations. The overall range of tests can be estimated from the fact that the 40 British examinations appear to involve some 160 different types of test. To analyse existing examinations throughout Europe in terms of their linguistic, notional, situational and operational content, and to place them in a proper scheme of equivalences, is clearly a major undertaking akin to the University of Sussex project. Agreement on such equivalences would however be a major step in European co-operation. It is an obligation placed on EEC members, but is in the interests of all member countries of the CCC. It is a project that should be officially sponsored and recognised but involves not only careful research but also proper negotiation. A committee of experts and interested parties should therefore consider the results of research and produce appropriate recommendations.

4.6.7 The model of the units/credits system should not simply provide sets of categories for comparison, but also suggest evaluative criteria and influence the development of examinations towards the objectives of the modern languages programme and the permanent education project of the CCC. In this connection, some comments by rapporteurs may be noted: "In Graz, Linz and Vienna, numbers of English and French courses include 'Zertifikatkurse' which lead up to the VHS-Certificate Examinations of the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband. Generally, in these courses, students work more intensively because there is a clear aim in sight, up-to-date textbooks are used, modern methods are applied and audio-visual aids are made use of. Therefore, they reach higher efficiency; whether the students take the examination or not is irrelevant" (Austria). "A completely new trait in Danish education is the new examination called Higher Preparation (Højere Forberedesle examen or HF) which can be taken by anybody after the age of 18 who qualifies in English, German and Mathematics. It is possible to prepare for it by self-study, but only a very small number of people use this opportunity. The number of HF classes has been doubling every year so far" (Denmark).

4.7.1 A further objective of the questionnaire was to elicit information on experiments under way or planned in the application of educational technology to language teaching, particularly as regards multi-media courses and individual teaching in adult education, since this is expected to be a major application of the units/credits system. Media-based courses are well-established in many countries. TV courses in particular attract very large audiences. In some cases the aim has been to entertain and to capture interest for recruitment to conventional courses (le français chez vous, Guten Tag). Others have been directed to

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immigrants, with a social as well as a linguistic aim (in the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany). In the UK, the BBC (and IBA) have had teaching programmes backed by discs and books on radio and TV for some 10 years, constituting a regular "rolling" programme. BBC English by Radio and Television has over the same period produced several multi-media series for export (Walter and Connie, Slim John). Their thinking is moving increasingly towards a modular approach involving the establishment of banks of grammatical and situational modules to be supplemented by teaching modules dealing with specific learning problems and built into courses by national producers (Total English). The development of integrated multi-media systems has gone furthest in Sweden (Start, Bitte) Finland (Dobrÿ Vecer) and the Federal Republic of Germany (Telekolleg).

4.7.2 Sweden is particularly rich in multi-media experimentation. In addition to the above radio and television-based courses, three other relevant programmes are reported:

(a) the GUME/Adults project of Gothenburg (Lärarhögskolan, Övre Husargatan 34, 413 14 Göteborg) is concerned with problems of foreign language teaching/learning in adult education. The field studies have made use of audio-visual aids and the language laboratory. Native teachers recorded the experimental lessons, which were then played back in class from tape recorders. Projector transparencies and student workbooks supplemented the lessons. This "systems approach" language teaching arrangement proved to work very well with adult students and seems to hold good hope for the development of individualised teaching materials.

(b) Another Swedish research project (UMT, Pedagogiska Institutionen, Lärarhögskolan, Fack, 200 45, Malmo 23) is working on the development of teaching methods and instructional materials. Although the research is being carried out at the adolescent level the numerous field studies have yielded much information that can be of interest to the teacher of adults as well.

(c) The TRUAS project of the Swedish Ministry of Education provides a multi-media English teaching programme for adolscents. Its organisers have already four years of practical experience of the many problems to be solved on the economical, organisational and pedagogical planes during the development and launching of multi-media projects.

There can be no doubt that the lessons to be drawn from these experiences can advance the European programme very appreciably and that a thorough study should therefore be made of them. Norway has also produced a basic course in English for sailors with self-instructional material on tape with diagnostic self-assessment tests in print (Learning English on Board). The Finnish introduction of a final achievement test organised by the national examinations board and linked to a multi-media course seems to have been very successful in

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raising and sustaining motivation in a way remarkably similar to the Austrian account of the effect of the VHS exam quoted above.

4.7.3 The units/credits system can contribute appreciably to the success of such multi-media courses by giving European recognition for credit to certificates awarded for success in a final achievement test based on the content of the course.

4.8.1 This section of the report may be summarised by saying that no adequate data appears at present to exist for the effective planning of adult language teaching in Europe, as to the pattern of either language needs or learner motivations or actual present patterns of adult language use or even formal language learning.

4.8.2 Nevertheless, the institutions which can provide this data base exist and as a result of a number of pilot studies including the work of the Group, the analytic tools, methods and procedures are sufficiently developed for an information drive to be possible, which will enable a European language learning/teaching/examining system to be based on knowledge rather than guess-work.

5.1.1 The other prime aspect of the Group's work in preparation for the units/credits system has been devoted to content analysis in relation to learning objectives. The various papers produced by the Group have necessarily ranged across the parameters in terms of which objectives are to be specified.

5.1.2 Van Ek (CCC/EES (72) 17, p. 45) points out that in order to be sufficiently specific, the definition of a learning objective should specify:

1. The content of that which is to be learned
2. The behaviour which the successful learner will be expected to be able to exhibit
3. The circumstances in which the behaviour will have to be exhibited
4. The criteria of acceptable performance.

Since the aim of language learning is first and foremost the ability to communicate verbally, an explicit definition of its objectives has to specify:

(a) the nature of the language communication situations in which verbal behaviour will have to be exhibited;

(b) what behaviour is to be considered adequate in each situation.

5.1.3 As we have seen in the discussion of Richterich's paper, the range of actual concrete situations generated by an adequate model is so large that there can be no question of rehearsing them

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in the learning process. As Richterich points out, a theory of the ephemeral and the unforeseen (thus essentially a generative model) is needed. The "situational" component of a speaker's communicative competence cannot consist of an inventory of situations he has met, but rather a strategy for steering a path through only partially controllable encounters by a series of linguistic "moves" (utterances), each move taking place in a situation determined by previous moves in a given environment (defined by the parameters of protagonists, actions, means, place, time and events) and modifying that situation in a particular direction.

5.1.4 The limitations of the establishment of categorised inventories in developing such strategies are well-known, especially when the possible moves are infinite in number. The work of the Group in setting up inventories and categories must therefore be judged by its utility in providing a descriptive framework within which some characteristics of courses and examinations may be stated, rather than an attempt to produce a theory of language learning and use.

5.1.5 We may agree that the "behaviour potential" developed in the language learner requires him to be able (a) to identify understand and interpret the utterances of speakers of the language (spoken and written), (b) to formulate and produce appropriate utterances so that they can in turn be identified, understood and interpreted by other speakers.

5.1.6 These abilities presuppose in the learner: (a) a knowledge of the linguistic system (i.e. of the formal and semantic properties of sentences); (b) mental skills (of an encoding and decoding character) in the formulation and perception of appropriate messages in real time; (c) physical skills in the articulation and catenation of utterances; (d) a knowledge of the conventions governing the appropriate use of language in situations; (e) an ability to recognise and respond to changes in situation.

5.2.1 The aim of a language course is to build up such a potential and that of an examination is to ascertain whether, and to what extent, it exists.

5.2.2 The fundamental problem of course design is that a fully-developed adult language presents either the appearance of an indefinite number of discreet language acts, or a highly integrated underlying system. Yet a learner cannot suddenly acquire a fully-developed linguistic competence. Very few will ever attain it, and cost-effectiveness considerations will necessarily oblige most learners to settle for far, far less. Language course design has to answer the question: how is a communicative competence best developed? (a) In what order of acquisition? (b) What relation of underlying knowledge to executive skills? (c) What reduced goals less than a full competence may be recognised?

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5.2.3 Traditionally, the process has been regarded as continuous with a parallel advance in all aspects of learning. Different levels of attainment are recognised in examinations, but without formal restrictions on competence but instead an informal concensus of examiners on what constitutes "simple", "intermediate" and "advanced" use of language, and with (usually tacit) scales of skill in reading, listening, speaking and writing.

5.2.4. The units/credits system has as one of its prerequisites, the replacement of such informal and intuitive procedures by explicit targets. It then becomes necessary to consider whether a taxonomy of partial objectives is possible. According to what principles then may a progression be established in (a) the acquisition of the formal linguistic system; (b) the linguistic situations which can be handled; (c) the meanings which can be expressed; (d) the linguistic functions which can be performed; (e) the linguistic operations which can be carried out; (f) the skill with which these operations can be carried out?

5.2.5 In addition to a progression from an elementary to an advanced competence which is necessarily imposed to some extent upon all learners, choices are also possible between different directions of knowledge and skill according to the specific needs of the learner. Within the units/credits system progression is to be dealt with by the establishment of certificates and diplomas at different levels (probably between 4 and 7 in number) while different directions are dealt with by the permitted choices between units/credits at the same level.

5.2.6 The Group has given a good deal of consideration to the principles governing the establishment of levels, and the nature of units which would constitute the "common core" required of all candidates for a linguistic certificate or diploma at a given level and those options available as choices or endorsements (or as a language element in a non-linguistic diploma). It appears to articulate language along grammatical, notional, functional and operational lines.

5.2.7 A logico-grammatical progression underlies most courses. Simple propositions are almost always the basis (proper noun + intransitive verb, proper noun + copula + adjective), with a successive introduction of noun phrase elements (pronouns, article, adjective, adverb and adjective), categories (gender, number) and functions (direct and indirect object, "goal" of prepositional phrases) with the consequent cases and associated morphology. Syntactic extension covers the traditional government and concord, order of elements, derivation of questions and imperatives, and then the various forms of sentence embedding (dependent clauses, nominalisations). Breaks in this progression are largely fortuitous, determined by such external factors as the number of hours in a term, the convenient size of books. etc. The straightforwardness of

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the progression is also disturbed by the strong pressure to disperse irregular morphology and anomalous syntactic features throughout a course, to reduce the load of rote learning. Other types of progression are subordinated to the structural. Situations are selected at random or because they are suitable carriers for a new point of grammar, notions and functions are ordered by the extent to which the grammatical point in focus lends itself to their expression, vocabulary is selected haphazardly or because of its morphology or syntax, operations are overloaded. At an elementary level, this progression is intelligible, and may seem almost to impose itself. Higher level courses are however left without any coherent ordering or structuring principle.

5.3.1 The Group has concentrated its efforts on the examination of the other principles of content organisation which seem prima facie to be more closely connected with the principles of the units/credits system, to enable them to be used either as an alternative basis for course and examination structure, or perhaps to enable these aspects of a course to be more adequately planned even though a traditional grammatical progression is retained, at any rate in the initial stages.

5.3.2 The alternative analyses have been applied to two problem areas which seemed to the Group to be critical for the units/credits concept.

5.3.3 The first is that of distinguishing between a "common core" necessary to all candidates for a general language certificate or diploma at a given level (with a "heavy" credit value) and specialised units (with "light" credits) which would be available as options or endorsements or represent the linguistic component of a non-linguistic diploma.
Mr. Wilkins (doc. CCC/EES (72) 67) develops a system of notional categories "appropriate to the means of and need for communication in a European context", based on "what kinds of thing a speaker needs to say, what situational constraints will be operating and, from these, what linguistic forms are suitable for the encoding of his message". He distinguishes semantico-grammatical categories of time (point of time, duration, time relation, frequency and sequence) quantity, space, case and deixis from categories of communicative function (such as modality, moral discipline and evaluation, suasion, argument, rational enquiry and exposition, personal emotions, emotional relations and social interpersonal relations), which may be expressed by (1) direct performative expressions; (2) grammatical expressions - capable of generating many sentences/utterances having the same communicative function; (3) idiomatic and new idiomatic expressions - susceptible of little or no further generalisation and (4) implied functions - utterances which do not overtly express the given function, but (strongly) imply it.

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5.3.4 It is recognised that conceptual and functional simplicity is bought at the expense of greater grammatical and lexical complexity. Synonymy relations will however permit most functions to be reconciled with simplicity of linguistic equipment at the first ("threshold") level. Higher levels of proficiency can then be treated as a recycling operation, in which the same gross functions are refined: "the situation is reintroduced with a wider range of language forms more closely reflecting the essential characteristics of the native speaker's language performance in this situation. The learner will have acquired greater confidence and wider variety in his means of expression".

5.3.5 Wilkins points out that even at an elementary level, "although the learner controls the language he produces outside the learning situation itself, he cannot control the language he hears. In this case provision may well have to be made for his early exposure to a much wider range of language than he will be required to produce". Clearly a coherent situational and functional policy should guide this wider exposure. It is of course recognised by Wilkins that the notional approach must be reconciled with the grammatical (e.g in the case of obligatory but non-natural gender) and with the situational.

5.4.1 The other main concern of the Group has been with the definition of a "threshold" level of competence. This level will be the lowest global learning objective in the framework of a units/credits system, below which no further levels can usefully be distinguished. It may be seen as the lowest level of effective language use, thus defining a "threshold" at which language learning establishes general communicative ability minimally adequate to the general range of language-using situations in a speech community and which is thus an appropriate objective for initial language courses.

5.4.2 Dr. van Ek (doc. CCC/EES (72) 17 and 72) has investigated the possibility of defining such a level and made concrete proposals for its lexical and grammatical content as well as a behavioural specification and suggestions for implementation.

In a discussion of the notion of "adequacy" of linguistic behaviour, van Ek shows its variability with context. What are the language needs of a shopper in the supermarket era? He also points out the discrepancy between the demands made on a learner as speaker and listener and notes the different evaluation of errors when viewed from the communication and pedagogic viewpoints.

5.4.3 The conclusion he draws is that "there is no such thing as one particular minimum level, basic level or threshold level in foreign language competence ... minimum language needs depend so much on the individual needs of various classes of learners and may vary so widely that decisions on the height of the threshold level will have to be based on other grounds than "minimum language needs".

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5.4.4 These grounds are essentially that the vocabulary and grammatical specifications should be based on the following criteria:

(1) The lists should provide a vocabulary which ought to satisfy the most basic verbal communication needs of adult learners in those situations in which the majority are most likely to find themselves in contact with foreign language speakers.

(2) They should be as short as possible, so as to encourage rather than deter would-be foreign language learners.

5.4.5 The method used is to abstract the vocabulary and grammatical content common to a corpus of existing courses for absolute beginners. It thus reflects the degree of overlap in situations chosen in course books, and the common features represented in those situations. Provided, of course, that the courses are not influenced by each other, the method acts as a filter on the fortuitous items which individual courses all contain. The number is held at about 750 words, as a realistic objective for an absolute beginners' course.

5.4.6 A list arrived at in this way cannot eliminate all arbitrariness in the inclusion and particularly exclusion of items. It cannot be mandatory, but in accordance with the spirit of the scheme acts as a yard-stick against which the adequacy of a proposed course can be roughly measured.

5.4.7 In addition to the lexical and grammatical specification, van Ek suggests specifications for the levels of skill demanded within the limits set by that specification:

1. Receptive: "the ability to understand utterances spoken by one person at a time at normal or below normal speech-rate in a carefully articulated standard accent", presented in the clearest way possible, the memory load being kept down to a minimum.

2. Productive: If a candidate succeeds in "getting his memory across" verbally in such a way that a native speaker of the foreign language may be supposed to have no difficulty in understanding the message, his achievement is to be considered satisfactory. Formal correctness is secondary.

5.5.1 Although the method pursued by van Ek is very different from that of Wilkins and Richterich, the results are convergent. Any course must be planned to have a certain linguistic

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content, lexical and grammatical, must produce skilled linguistic performances calling on those resources, must cover a certain range of situations in which the participants engage in linguistic interactions and express a succession of meanings. A multi-faceted conceptual framework is necessary if the most cost-effective solution to the particular teaching problem is to be found.

6.1.1 To summarise the results of the Group's work up to the end of 1972, we may say that the conceptual and methodological foundations have been laid for:

(a) the establishment of a proper data base in terms of adult language use, learning, motivations and needs for informed planning in these fields;

(b) the elaboration of a system of units differentiated by

(i) linguistic content, lexically, grammatically and semantically defined;

(ii) the linguistic operations performed and the situations in which they are set;

according to levels and specialisations around a common core.

6.1.2 Research is now in progress into the fuller specification of operational objectives and the outline of a units/credits system based on the principles developed above. Later stages of the scheme will involve the active co-operation of wider circles engaged in adult language teaching, persumably within a regular structure of committees, in order to apply the system to the actual language teaching situation, to develop new types of language course, including multi-media courses, courses with a substantial self-instructional and self-assessment component, and systems of examination and assessment leading to the award of credits accumulable for certificates and diplomas sponsored by the Council of Europe.

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